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SUBJECT: (KOSOVO): 2008 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 120019

¶1. (U) Following is the submission from U.S. Embassy in Pristina for Kosovo's 2008 Counterterrorism Report.

¶2. (U) The UN Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) administered Kosovo under the authority of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1244 of 1999 until June 15, when Kosovo's constitution came into effect. With the promulgation of the Kosovo constitution in June 2008, the Kosovo Government assumed growing responsibility for the country's civil administration and law enforcement, including combating terrorism. The European Union's Rule-of-Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) started operating on December 9 and replaced UNMIK Police throughout the country, and EULEX provides advice and mentoring to Kosovo rule-of-law institutions.

¶3. (U) The Kosovo Government and UNMIK continued to monitor suspected terrorist activity throughout the year. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) suspected that a few of the more than 1,000 NGOs operating in Kosovo were involved in suspicious activities and sought to prevent extremists from using NGOs to gain a foothold in Kosovo. Some NGOs used public facilities for religious gatherings, but Kosovo authorities and municipalities attempted to prevent misuse of facilities for events that had no consent from the relevant religious community.

¶4. (U) The Kosovo Police (KP) and UNMIK Police Counterterrorism Units (CTUs) were primarily responsible for Kosovo's counterterrorism efforts but remained small and lacked resources. In December the UNMIK CTU transferred its responsibilities to EULEX. Prior to that, the UNMIK Police CTU monitored, mentored, and advised their KP CTU counterparts. While UNMIK possessed executive authority over the KP, in practice it was not exercised. The KP and UNMIK received information and analysis support from the UNMIK Central Intelligence Unit (CIU) and the KP CTU's intelligence, surveillance, and investigations units. The KP CTU, currently manned at half its intended strength, continues to focus on building up its unit, training and equipping its officers, and collecting information on potential terrorist threats.

¶5. (U) Porous boundaries that were easily crossed by individuals trafficking in people, weapons, and narcotics hampered Kosovo's counterterrorism efforts. The Kosovo Border Police patrol all border crossing points except Gates 1 and 31 in northern Kosovo, which were staffed by UNMIK and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) until December 9, when EULEX replaced UNMIK Police and assumed control of the two border points. KFOR continues to maintain a presence at the gates. The Border Police and KFOR jointly patrol the entire "Green Border" perimeter, the area where there are no official manned borders or border gates. This patrolling along the "Green Border" extends up to the actual border, but traffickers take advantage of numerous roads and trails leading into Kosovo that lack border controls. Poorly paid border and customs officials were susceptible to corruption.

¶6. (U) The KP reported that witness intimidation was not an obstacle to combating terrorism in Kosovo in 2008. UNMIK's Department of Justice continued its Witness Protection Task Force to ensure that witness intimidation did not resurface as a problem in other areas.

In 2008, the Task Force completed constructing its safe house, encouraged the use of video conferencing equipment in Kosovo's district courts, and increased its efforts to secure relocation agreements with other jurisdictions.

¶7. (U) One high profile incident of suspected terrorism occurred during the year. On November 14, an explosive device detonated in front of the headquarters of the International Civilian Organization (ICO), the institution charged with supervising Kosovo's independence. There were no injuries in the attack. Kosovo Police continued to investigate the incident at year's end. There was one unverified claim of responsibility from a previously unknown group, but Kosovo authorities had insufficient evidence to bring charges against any perpetrators.

¶8. (U) The UNMIK Department of Justice (DOJ) conducted additional terrorism investigations independent of Kosovo authorities. During the year, UNMIK DOJ obtained two terrorism-related convictions. International prosecutors and the Kosovo Special Prosecutor's Office (KSPO) also initiated four terrorism-related investigations: three of them by the KSPO, and one by an international prosecutor. One trial, handled by the KSPO before a panel of local judges, is ongoing, while two cases handled by International Prosecutors are pending trial. UNMIK DOJ made no indictments in terrorism cases during this period.

¶9. (U) The Albanian National Army (AKSH), which UNMIK designated as a terrorist organization in 2003, continued to intimidate Kosovo citizens. On January 26, three men were arrested for shooting at a KP police officer in Pristina. After their arrest, the three claimed AKSH membership, as did a fourth, who was arrested on April 25. In a separate incident on September 17, in the town of Vushtrri/Vucitrn, a bus carrying workers enroute to work at the KEK Power Plant were stopped at a "checkpoint" manned by 12 to 13 men wearing AKSH insignia and carrying weapons. The men examined the identification of all present and then released the workers. The case continues under investigation, but the KP has not made any arrests.

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